

Stephanie Tubbs
JrCOSTEP – Summer 2005
Wright State University
Colorado River Service Unit – Phoenix Area IHS



The U. S. Public Health Service JR COSTEP program is a program that has wonderful benefits and exceptional experiences. Once you have experienced this program, you will understand the opportunities that it provides to students across the United States. I am a senior at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, pursuing a degree in Environmental Health Science. To graduate from my program, I am required to complete an internship. This internship was recommended to me by my father, who is also a Commissioned Officer serving in the USPHS.

I was stationed in Parker, AZ working with Indian Health Service (IHS) at the Colorado River Service Unit. One of the interesting and exciting things that I experienced out here is how small the world can seem. My preceptor,

LCDR Hayden Hardie, is a graduate from the same university that I am attending, Wright State University. Right away I had felt welcomed and excited about this opportunity. The Colorado River Indian Reservation is unique because it surrounds the town of Parker, AZ. The town of Parker is non-Tribal while the remaining area is part of the Reservation. Additionally, the Reservation lies within the State boundaries of Arizona and California. As a result, environmental issues that crossed boundaries required me to interact with both Tribal agencies (i.e. Tribal Environmental Protection Office, Fish and Game Office, and the Health Department) and non-Tribal agencies (i.e. Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, La Paz County Health Department,



Town of Parker). Throughout the summer, I was able to see how each agency handles environmental issues and interacts with the other agencies.

During the summer, I experienced many different environmental issues such as food service surveys, sanitation issues, and injury prevention. Some sanitation issues that Hayden and I were asked to investigate included a wastewater pipe break and an abandoned concrete foundation in the middle of an agriculture field. Some injury prevention activities I

attended included a fellowship project meeting concerning safety in elderly homes, and a Car Safety Seat Training Session.

Mosquito trapping was done throughout my entire internship to monitor West Nile Virus (WNV). This was interesting because it was a strong collaborative effort between the CRIT Environmental Protection Office (EPO), La Paz County Health Department, and CRIT Fish and Game Office. This showed me that it's not just IHS working on environmental issues but that it's the whole community working together to get things accomplished on the Colorado River Indian Reservation. Another condition that was investigated while stationed in Parker was the illegal dumping of hazardous materials by a local auto garage in the town. The facility was storing thousands of used tires, lead acid batteries, and other solid waste inappropriately. Additionally, the owner was responsible for allowing used motor oil to be disposed of on Tribal lands. I was able to see all the different agencies working together because the property was on city land but some of the issues crossed onto Tribal lands.

My personal project assigned to me was a water well assessment on the reservation to identify the status of water wells. Through the summer, I located water wells, completed site inspection forms, and recorded GPS points. I also documented the water wells by taking a digital picture of each well located and made a determination of whether it was a health and safety hazard. I felt like I had accomplished something with this project because it will be used as a platform in the future for possible funding to complete this project and properly abandon water wells.



I also traveled with LTJG Isabel Espinosa to the Hualapai Reservation. This reservation is located on the west side of the Grand Canyon. On this trip, not only did I conduct food service surveys, I also got to experience one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Grand Canyon. Being the first time experiencing that while working was something that I will never forget. The experiences and opportunities that are encountered on this internship are exceptional. On my own time, I also traveled to Las Vegas and Los Angeles. This summer internship offered a great opportunity to see incredible sights during both work and leisure time.

This summer showed me that I was going to school for what I really wanted to do in my life and showed me all the different options I do have when I graduate. The relationships I made with the different co-workers are phenomenal. They have taught me so much about the “job” world and the “real” world and for that I will never forget them. I also want to say extra thanks to Hayden Hardie for trying to keep me occupied with things that interest me and for making sure that I had a great experience. Hayden, you did all of that and more!

To anyone who is completing a degree in environmental health science, I encourage you to do a JR COSTEP internship with the USPHS because of the experience that you receive and all of the hands on knowledge that you will gain. Everyone that I have worked with will teach you so much and they will make sure that you enjoy your experience with Indian Health Service and the U.S. Public Health Service.